

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 7, line 23 with the following amended paragraph:

A1 The stack 505 is in continuous contact at two boundaries ~~532a~~ 523a and ~~532b~~ 523b with the permanent magnetic hard bias layers 535a and 535b, respectively. The boundaries 532a and 532b may be of a variety of shapes, including stepped as illustrated in Figure 5, slanted so that the GMR sensing layer 510 is narrower than the SAL 530, and numerous other shapes known in the art.